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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "An Inexpensive Children's Party." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

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A young friend who lives in Durhamville, New York, is going to have a birthday this month -- a most important birthday. She will be six years old. And her mother has written to ask for some party suggestions. If any birthday deserves a successful party, certainly the sixth one does. Reaching school age is a big event in anyone's life, and deserves a good celebration. So I've been conferring with the specialists and am glad to pass along their ideas which ought to help any mother faced with the same problem.

Sensible parents these days believe in painless parties for their children -- parties that give the youngsters lots of fun but cause no upsets afterwards. Such parties are just as easy and usually less expensive than the kind of celebration where the young guests stuff themselves with quantities of too rich and too sweet food, have too much excitement, and stay up too late. But a good party does require some careful planning of food and games. If you can serve the young guests at a regular mealtime that is ideal. If they have substantial food as well as birthday cake and sweets, the refreshments will really take the place of a meal. Of course, that isn't always possible, so let's talk first about suitable food to serve at a between-meal party.

Children always enjoy sucking the juice out of an orange through a stick of lemon candy. And they like fruit juice served in small glasses or sherbet cups, or you can make fruit juice into fruit ice or a milk sherbet. Serve fruit in any of these ways, and serve a slice of birthday cake with it -- a sunshine or golden sponge cake with a simple frosting. That will be plenty, unless you want to have a few simple hard candies, dried fruit candy or popcorn balls. If the party comes on a week day, give children their refreshments first, and have games afterward to work up appetites for supper.

If you are inviting only a few young guests and plan to serve a meal, make it an early supper on a week day or a noon lunch on Saturday, whichever time is most convenient. The same menu will do for either hour. Of course, for six-year-olds evening parties are not suitable. Late hours, heavy rich sweet food, and too much excitement bring sleeplessness and hard times for small digestions. No use subjecting your young friends to that.

You don't need fancy food or expensive food for a childrens' birthday meal. Serve the usual wholesome food that is suitable for children of this age, but dress up each dish so that it will look "special," -- will suggest a party. Children have an eye for color, so make the table as gay as possible.

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Though Easter is past, the children will still enjoy an Easter party featuring eggs and Easter bunnies and spring colors like yellows, and pale greens in table decorations, food and games -- yellow spring flowers for the centerpiece, gay yellow and green balloons tied to the back of each chair, yellow lemon or orange icing on the cake, and six yellow candles, of course. Colorful china or glassware may also carry out the color scheme.

Now about the menu. One of the most attractive egg dishes for an occasion like this is goldenrod eggs. Make a medium white sauce. Put in the whites of hard-cooked eggs cut in small pieces. Press the yellow yolks of eggs through a sieve and sprinkle over the white mixture. Serve hot in individual glass ramekins, one on each child's plate. Next, serve crisp pieces of lettuce and long, thin strips of carrot. The children can eat these out of hand, just as the Easter Bunny eats his lettuce and carrots. Instead of bread or rolls, make dainty, whole-wheat bread and butter sandwiches, cut small enough for a child to hold conveniently. You can wrap a couple of these small sandwiches up in cellophane or waxed paper and tie it with yellow baby ribbon. Children never fail to enjoy these little dressed-up sandwiches. Or you can serve small packages of three crisp crackers in the same way. For dessert you can make delicious ice cream flavored with peppermint stick candy, or mint ice or sherbet. The best cake for children at this age is sponge cake. Fortunately, eggs are low in price and sponge cake carries out the yellow color scheme. You can ice it with orange or lemon frosting and decorate with colored candles. The favors can be small, colored paper baskets which you can make yourself, or buy and which the children will use right after supper in an Easter egg hunt. For the hunt, hide jelly beans or other small hard egg-shaped candies. The children can fill their baskets as they find their eggs. Otherwise, you can serve little hard candies at dessert time.

There's the menu, but somebody is sure to ask what to serve the children to drink. They will enjoy fruit juice or their usual milk in colored glasses or yellow cups.

At this age children like active games, such as an Easter version of the old donkey game -- pinning a basket on the Easter Rabbit. Musical chairs is another old favorite. The time to play these games is before the meal, if the children are staying to supper. Afterward the egg hunt is sufficient excitement. If the children stay later, story telling or some quiet recreation is most suitable.

Many children's parties are unsuccessful because the food and games are chosen to please grown-ups rather than the youngsters. Simple fun and simple food appeal most and are best for small people of this age.

TOMORROW: "Grades in Canned Foods."

